



On the road to Shanghai

Special Olympics Committee presents their Ping-Pong team

Most of the world is well aware that in 2008 the Summer Olympics will take place in Beijing, China. Many are following the progress of their favorite athletes as they train and compete to qualify for their countries' teams. In October of this year, the International Special Olympics will take place in Shanghai, and Aruba's special athletes are also preparing to compete on behalf of their country.

This week is International Awareness Week for the Mentally Challenged. The *Stichting Voor Verstandelijk Gehandicapten Aruba* (SVGA-Foundation for the Mentally Challenged in Dutch) is the parent organization of the Special Olympics Foundation, and they are conducting a number of events over the week. On Monday, the Director of the SVGA, Arturo Werleman along with Netty Williams, Head of the Volunteers and Elvira Arias of Man Na Obra introduced Aruba's Ping-Pong team at the Betico Croes Stadium in Santa Cruz.

Deshaneira Mohammad, Zaina Maduro, Jhorzy Arias and Maikel Wouters spent an afternoon honing their skills with Coach Jose Puente, who will travel with them to China, and assistant coach Gervasio Arias. Coach Puente put them through their paces while parents and volunteers cheered them on.

On Thursday, June 28, the team will give a fund-raising demonstration at the Certified Shopping Mall from 4:00 until 7:00 PM in continuation of "Awareness Week." Special Olympics is founded on the belief that people with intellectual disabilities can, with proper instruction and encouragement, learn, enjoy and benefit from participation in individual and team sports. For more information about the Special Olympics, its history and goals, visit website address: www.2007specialolympics.com/Webenglish.

Awareness week ends this Saturday with the presentation of the Olympic bowling team at the Eagle Bowling Palace. The Special Olympics Foundation revealed they plan to send fourteen athletes to Shanghai who will compete in Bowling, Ping-Pong, Track & Field, and Swimming. A number of them have already brought back gold, silver, and bronze medals from competitions around the Caribbean, and their coaches are optimistic about their performance in Shanghai.